



WVU Extension Service and statewide partners launch 'W.Va. Agritourism Initiative- Greenbrier Valley' to help local farm operators profit from new 'value-added' opportunities

Helping local farmers create and profit from farm-based tourism opportunities is the idea behind West Virginia University Extension Service's new *Agritourism Initiative – Greenbrier Valley*, a training program for aspiring and beginning agritourism operators in the Greenbrier Valley.

With the help of a WVU Community Engagement grant, WVU and industry experts will engage participants in a series of five, day-long training sessions in areas like risk-management, marketing, hospitality management and business collaborations.

"Farmers are exploring agritourism and farm-based education as an opportunity to help diversify farm income and improve cash flows," [Dee Singh-Knights](#), WVU Extension Service agricultural economics specialist, said. "The challenge is the lack of education-specific resources and expertise to help them effectively evaluate and exploit this new opportunity."

Organizers say the program will serve as a 'one-stop-shop' for agritourism resources, helping farmers to better navigate the risk management issues arising from agritourism activities.

"The program explores how to integrate entertainment, education and economics for a successful agritourism operation. Additionally, our agritourism operators will learn about key partnerships and collaborations to stimulate local competitiveness and

better meet their consumer needs," Allison Tomlinson, WVU Extension Agent, Munroe County, said.

The program is a collaborative effort between WVU Extension Service, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, and the West Virginia Division of Tourism.

Participants who successfully complete the course requirements are eligible for certification as a *West Virginia Agritourism Initiative Business*.

Classes are limited to 20 participants and registration is available on a first-come, first-served basis until October 23rd, 2015. Your cost of the entire course package is only \$30 and includes course materials, meals and snacks; other costs for the program is being offset by grant funding from a WVU Community Engagement Grant.

The classes are offered from 9.00am to 3.30pm at the Greenbrier Valley Visitors Center, on Nov 14th, Dec 12th, Jan 9th, Feb 13th, and Mar 12th.

Please go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wv-agritourism-farm-based-education-initiative-greenbrier-valley-tickets-18758030775> to register before October 23rd, 2015.

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